

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF ROBERT HENRY LAMBORN.

BY CARRIE B. AARON.

At Hornblue Hill, Chester county, Pa., not far from the historic Kennett, whose beauties have been the theme of Bayard Taylor's pen, Robert Henry Lamborn was born, October 29, 1835.

His boyhood was spent in the home of his fathers, and he was thus surrounded by the advantages of inherited prosperity. His father was a member of the Society of Friends, and was an intelligent man of refined tastes, a close observer, a bright conversationalist and a wide reader. The son inherited his prepossessing appearance, courteous manner, dignified bearing and agreeable disposition.

Young Lamborn's education was given a scientific turn by the influence and patronage of his uncle, Jacob Pierce, who served as Librarian of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia from December, 1817, to December, 1826, and who, in the early days of the institution, had, at one time, all its collections stored in one of his spare back rooms. No doubt the youth received his first inspiration for "collecting" while in such environment.

After receiving a common-school education and a special training at the Polytechnic College in Philadelphia, he determined to continue his studies in civil engineering abroad. He secured means to do so by the publication of original essays on the metallurgy of copper, silver and lead,<sup>1</sup> works which, although long superseded, were considered ably written and used as text-books both here and abroad. He became a student of the Royal Saxon Mining Academy of Freiberg, and the School of Mines in Paris, graduating from the University of Giessen, from which he later received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, Dr. Lamborn returned from Europe and joined the army, serving with the Anderson

<sup>1</sup> *A Treatise on the Metallurgy of Copper*, J. Weale, London, 1860, and *A Treatise on the Metallurgy of Silver and Lead*, J. Weale, London, 1861.

Cavalry at the Battle of Antietam, under Captain Palmer. He became captain on the staff of Gen. John F. Reynolds in 1862.

After the war he was twice elected City Surveyor of Trenton, N. J. He was engineer in charge of fuel and iron rails on the Pennsylvania Railroad when coal was displacing wood as fuel for engines, and steel was finally supplanting iron. He was Secretary of the American Iron and Steel Association at the period of its development into an institution of national importance, and when the publication of iron and steel statistics became a necessity. He was Secretary, Treasurer and Director of the first railroad to connect the Mississippi river and Lake Superior, and founder, Treasurer and Director of the Western Land Association, which began the building up of Duluth when the town consisted of but seven houses. He was made President and Director of the National Land Improvement Company. He participated in founding the towns of Colorado Springs and Manitou, and in colonizing the country at the base of Pike's Peak.

Early in his career, while residing in Pittsburg, where he was appointed the first chemical expert for the Pennsylvania Railroad, Dr. Lamborn became acquainted with Mr. Andrew Carnegie and others who have done so much for the development of the industrial resources of western Pennsylvania, with whom he maintained a life-long friendship. Mr. Carnegie writes of him: "As a young man he was thoroughly practical, quiet, reserved, dignified, eminently scientific. . . . He wore kid gloves, which were then rare in western Pennsylvania; this fact rendered him somewhat an object of suspicion at first, something rather effeminate; one had only to know him to see how he survived his kid gloves. Year after year he gained more and more the respect and confidence of all of us, and finally became a friend and one of the circle whose loss was deeply deplored."

Dr. Lamborn, as General Manager of various Western railways, introduced the first coke blast furnaces and the first Bessemer steel ingot and rail works west of the Missouri river.

While engaged in extensive railroad and mining interests, he lost no opportunity of studying the cliff dwellers and other primitive inhabitants, making at the same time collections of pottery and ethnological objects which he presented to various institutions.

While in Mexico he devoted much attention to the art of that

country, subsequently publishing his observations in 1891 under the title, *Mexican Paintings and Painters*, Bouton, N. Y. The Lamborn Collection in Memorial Hall, Philadelphia, contains the material secured in Mexico, as well as many specimens gathered in Europe to illustrate the history of civilization in the Italian Peninsula, beginning with relics from the prehistoric Terra Mane period and from the almost prehistoric Etruscan times.

While engaged in building the Lake Superior Railroad, Dr. Lamborn suffered so from the attacks of countless mosquitos, that he became interested in extermination of the insect, and later offered prizes for the three best essays on the subject. These were published under the title *Dragonflies vs. Mosquitos: The Lamborn Prize Essays*, D. Appleton, New York, 1890.

As a beekeeper Dr. Lamborn will long be remembered by many friends who had received from him colonies of Italian bees. He enjoyed the careful study of the social organization of a hive, his special interest being the development of a stingless bee. While intent upon these investigations his identity as a railroad magnate would be quite lost under his bee hat and veil.

While the name of Robert H. Lamborn will not be found recorded among those of the great scientists of the world, his environments, the natural bent of his mind, his broad views of life, together with an executive and business ability far beyond the average, constituted a unique personality. His interests in mining and metals and the demands of business made him a constant traveler over large areas. It was thus impossible for him to give the sustained attention necessary to effectively cultivate the many subjects of natural history which he loved, and in which he might have become eminent if his interests had been more concentrated.

Philadelphia was his favorite city. During the last years of his life he retained here a domicile, and would probably have made his home here had his life been prolonged.

Dr. Lamborn expressed his opinions of the unequal distribution of wealth in a manner which showed his altruistic notions as to the power and influence of money when used productively. He believed that great fortunes should be regarded as capital in trust for the permanent benefit of society, and that the owner of a large amount of money could erect no better monument to himself, than by systematically employing a great number of persons with the

aim of improving their social conditions. He was opposed to indiscriminate charity, regarding it as one of the causes of pauperism and the natural demoralization which is the usual result of receiving something for nothing.

That Dr. Lamborn recognized the institutions which foster the various branches of science as fitting beneficiaries of his wealth was evidenced by the placing of his collections of archaeological books, ethnological objects, Etruscan relics, Mexican pottery, etc., where, free to the public, they may be used for reference and instruction as additions to the educational resources of the several repositories. He advocated the opening of all museums, parks, art galleries and places of healthful recreation to the public on Sunday, that all might be brought in contact with the beautiful in nature and with man's best handiwork. He placed none of his collections in any museum which exacted an admission fee.

Although Dr. Lamborn was a man of large means, he frequently suggested money-making schemes to young people whom he wished to employ, by offering work on a profit-sharing basis, his object being to engage the earnest attention of students and to develop a love of research, ends more likely to be secured by copartnership than by patronage. As an incentive to study, he frequently offered prizes of money for the investigation of various scientific questions, his interest being especially in the direction of the cultivation of bees and flowers.

Shortly before his death Dr. Lamborn placed a sum of money with the President of Swarthmore College to be paid in prizes for the two clearest and most useful essays upon the theme, "What important inventions, discoveries, observations, ideas or acts tending to advance civilization have been contributed by members of the Society of Friends, or by persons descended from members of that Society, or by persons guided or employed by such members, with an estimate of the number of members composing the Society each twenty years since its foundation." Some essays were written in response but have not been published.

During the greater part of his active life Dr. Lamborn was conscious of the existence of organic cardiac weakness, which, it is believed, deterred him from marrying, and resulted in his sudden death in New York, after a slight, apparently trivial, indisposition, January 14, 1895.

Dr. Lamborn's success in life was due to his persistent efforts to master difficulties, the possession of the loftiest aims and an invincible purpose of acting for the right.

All knowledge which he acquired by personal research or through his patronage of students he cheerfully gave to the world. Science has been enriched by his benefactions to the several institutions in which his library and collections have been placed.

His special interest in the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, his devotion to its objects and his approval of its administration have been most practically indicated by the terms of his last will which left to the Society without conditions his entire estate for the advancement of its work in biology and anthropology. Although, because of a legal technicality—a question of domicile and a provision of New York law which seems to have been framed solely for the benefit of lawyers—his benevolent intention has not been entirely fulfilled, the portion of his estate of which the Academy has become possessed by an agreement with the heirs-at-law, forms a most important addition to its resources and will enable the Society to effect such development in the departments indicated as will constitute a lasting memorial of its generous benefactor, who, by the magnitude of his gift, stands first among the many earnest men devoted to the advancement of knowledge who have substantially manifested their interest in its well-being.

Miss Anna Wharton, in the following ode, has briefly given expression to the feelings of many who hold Dr. Lamborn in grateful and appreciative memory :

Esteem he won from many loyal friends,  
To whom his well-stored mind and humor keen,  
His generous heart, where kindly traits convene,  
Had drawn him by that bond which nothing rends.  
And now where his remembered image blends  
With thronging shadows of the world unseen,  
That honored figure of the stately mien  
Is crowned with light which grateful memory lends.

His life so full of thought and effort high,  
Brought that success which is to sloth unknown,  
But as he had not formed that dearer tie  
Which makes a home and kindred of one's own,  
There at the last no helping hand was nigh,  
No love to soothe him, and he died alone.